



INTERAGENCY CONNECTION

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Chair's Corner



Summer has begun! The temperatures are heating up and so are our FEB's activities!

Last month we celebrated **Public Service Recognition Week** with our annual Awards ceremony. Photos of the event and our finalists are available on Dropbox and can be accessed by

sending an email to Charles.Abell@sba.gov for the link.

This year, the **Awards Committee** did an outstanding job in making this event rise to the prestigious level of recognition for our finalists. I want to add a special "Thank You"! for their dedication and hard work!



2018 FEB Awards Committee

As part of our Public Service Recognition efforts, we also posted **Federal agency mission**

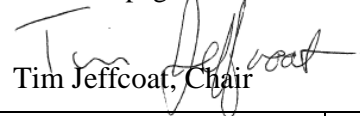
videos on our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/HoustonFEB/>. One was posted for each day, Monday through Friday, beginning May 7th through May 17th. I want to thank all the agencies that submitted videos for this initiative!

Our FEB has coordinated a **day of training with the Federal Protective Service**. This is an opportunity to learn more about what they do to protect federal space occupied by federal employees. A registration is provided in this email for your convenience.

We also have **Crisis Communications training** coordinated for our senior leaders/managers. This will be a full day of training and preparation to interact with the media if the occasion ever arises. (Registration on pg 8)

Last month, we had a meeting on our FEB's **Medical Countermeasures initiative**. You will see more on this in the near future, allowing you to volunteer your agency as a Closed POD (point of dispensing). Information is being developed regarding the responsibilities for POD locations and a form for you to complete to volunteer.

Please read about changes in our **FEB Staff office** on page 3 of this newsletter!


Tim Jeffcoat, Chair

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6 POWER TIPS FOR HAVING A TOUGH CONVERSATION

You tried to deal with the issue when it was small but there's no improvement. Now it's time for a tough conversation.

Power Tips for Tough Conversations:

#1. Build positive relationships:

Positive relationships are the foundation for successful tough conversations.

Pat people on the back more than kicking them in the pants. You suck the life out of people when all you do is point out what's wrong.

#2.

Preparation:

Tell people they matter by being prepared when they show up.



Don't say, "I'll be with you after I finish this email."

1. Set your phone to 'do not disturb' before they arrive.
2. Put your computer to sleep.
3. Get your head in a positive space.
 - Write down three positive qualities you see in the person.
 - Record your best intention.
4. Think more about what you want than what you don't want.

"Before anything else, preparation is the key to success." Alexander Graham Bell

#3. Location:

Your office is number three on the list of best places to have a tough conversation.

Have tough conversations in their office, not yours. If their office isn't an option, choose a neutral space or take a walk.

Remove physical barriers. Don't sit behind your desk, for example.

#4. Stay open:

Prepare for a tough conversation with a

trusted adviser or coach, but don't script everything you plan to say.

#5. Get to the point quickly:

Avoid chit-chat. The feedback sandwich is full of baloney. It's a terrible waste of positive affirmations.

1. "Let's jump right in."
2. "There's an issue I'd like to discuss."

#6. Turn to the future:

Turn tough conversations toward the future quickly.

Don't spend 45 minutes explaining what's wrong and 10 minutes discussing how to make it right.

1. State the issue.
2. Give an example.
3. Declare your positive intention for them.
4. Ask, "How might you improve in this area?"

<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2018/03/22/6-power-tips-for-tough-conversations/>

Houston Federal Executive Board

Did you Know?

Staff Changes in the Houston FEB office



Gerald Poole, FEB Assistant, left the Federal Executive Board office the end of April 2018. He had an career opportunity with an organization that more

closely aligned with his talents and education. We thank him for his service to the Houston Federal Community the past 2-1/2 years and wish him the best in his future endeavors!

Fortunately, Julius Keys, a Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) employee was serving on a detail to the FEB Office as part of his Leadership Development Program at the time. He was a tremendous help during the transition and quickly became LeAnn's right hand!

Upon the completion of his detail (strategically timed just AFTER our annual awards ceremony), Mr. Keys has negotiated a continuing partnership with the Houston FEB. DCMA has agreed to allow Mr. Keys to continue to work with our FEB on a collateral duty as Deputy Director.



Julius Keys, DCMA

In addition, most recently, the U.S. Small Business Administration has agreed to allow Ann Renay Highsmith to work on FEB initiatives and projects as a collateral duty. Ann Renay will provide support for our FEB projects and activities.

Ann Renay will provide program support for our FEBs initiatives and activities.

Ann Renay Highsmith,
U.S. Small Business
Administration



Your FEB Staff:



Houston Federal Executive Board Staff

Julius Keys, Deputy Director

LeAnn Jenkins, Executive Director

Ann Renay Highsmith, Executive Assistant

How to Uncover Your Communication Weaknesses

Sometimes, we're aware of our weaknesses. Perhaps more often, we're not.

That may be because we've never received straightforward, accurate feedback – a factor that's especially true for executives as they rise to positions where reports are less willing to critique them honestly. It may be because overlooking our flaws is easier than confronting them.

Regardless, communicating well means learning to navigate through and past communication weaknesses. To do that requires that we uncover our communication weaknesses.

It's not easy. In fact, it can be intimidating. But the reality is that nobody is perfect, and there's power in vulnerability. We've worked with top-level executives at major corporations who have come to realize their inability to engage audiences. We've worked with rising leaders to identify and overcome timidity in communication.

Everyone has weaknesses. Identifying your shortcomings is the first step toward improving.

So, don't stay blind to your communication weaknesses; putting your head in the sand will only hinder your career, your ability to perform your job, and, ultimately, even your relationships.

Communication skills are essential in nearly any position, and anyone can learn the techniques that are necessary to communicate well. Instead of staying intentionally ignorant, take stock of your skills, seek out accurate feedback, and pursue avenues toward improvement.

It can be an intimidating endeavor. But you don't have to go it alone – we're here to help. And as you identify your weaknesses, you'll grow as a communicator.

Ready to get started?

The Signs You May Need to Improve as a Communicator

Unsure whether or not you have a communication weakness worth addressing? Let's start by identifying a few of the common

flags that signify potential issues.

Often, these signals won't appear independently; if your communication skills require significant improvement, you'll tend to see a few of these signals pop up repeatedly.

1. You see glazed eyes when you present.

We've all been there at some point: in the middle of a presentation, only to look around the room and see nodding heads, glazed eyes, and a general state of complete disinterest.

Glazed eyes are generally not a good sign.

Now, by no means can you expect to consistently capture and maintain the full attention of everyone in every room you present in. In today's age of cell phone distractions, that's practically impossible. But if, more often than not, people seem to zone out when you start speaking, it's a surefire sign your presentation skills can be improved.

2. People are always asking you for more information.

If you find yourself consistently being asked for more information, it's a sign you may need to work on improving your communication skills.

For example, if you lead a meeting where you present what you feel are the key points, only to be bombarded with questions asking for additional information, you've likely misaligned your message with your audience's needs. This is often a side effect of shaping a presentation around a data-heavy PowerPoint, as opposed to crafting a message around integral issues using story-based examples.

There will always be questions – and that's a good thing, in terms of discussion and engagement. Questions themselves aren't a problem. It is a problem, though, if you're consistently asked to elaborate on mission-critical information that you should have addressed to start.

3. People ask about things you've already said.

Along those lines: it's a problem if you're

How to Uncover Your Communication Weaknesses (cont'd)

consistently receiving questions around information you've already presented.

If that's the case, you may be presenting too much information for people to process. Or, you may be presenting information unclearly. Either way, you likely have a communication issue.

4. You're afraid.

Are you afraid of public speaking? If you are, you're not alone – public speaking is the most common fear, after all. But there's a good chance that you may need to work on your speaking skills.

Some level of anxiety is expected, even for veteran presenters. That feeling is akin to the nerves an athlete gets before competition: the anticipation that accompanies a big stage and an intense performance. It can even play a role in driving energy and engagement.

But if you're dealing with debilitating fear when it's time to present, you could almost certainly benefit from presentations training.

If you're willing to acknowledge it and focus on confronting it, take heart: you can overcome your fear.

5. Most of your communication interactions create frustration.

This sign may seem a bit more subjective; it may also be more difficult for you to identify yourself. But, if a majority of your communication interactions result in a frustrated party, you probably have an issue worth working on.

Your own frustration is easy enough to gauge. Do you feel consistently consternated by people's inability to comprehend your messages? Are you often impatient with how long it's taking you to get your point across? If you're frustrated, the issue is more obvious.

Sometimes, though, you may be unaware of the frustration you're causing others when you communicate. You may be unintentionally condescending. You may be unknowingly impatient. You may appear disinterested without knowing it.

Uncovering these issues may require seeking out accurate feedback from the people you regularly interact with. Hearing critiques of your communication may not be easy, but acknowledging feedback is better than keeping your head in the sand and causing unnecessary frustration to those around you.

6. People avoid communicating with you.

Finally, you likely have a communication weakness if people avoid communicating with you.

For instance: if you communicate with a direct report on a project, only to have them ask somebody else come to you to ask for clarification, you may be unknowingly discouraging others from being open with you.

If your team seems to tiptoe around issues, or if they get tight-lipped in interactions with you, you may have an issue.

Don't ignore it. Dig into it. People will appreciate your vulnerability, and you'll be able to take steps toward improvement.

What to Do Next

So, you've identified a communication issue. What do you do next?

The answer: start working to improve. Although you can attempt to navigate around weaknesses – for instance, by trying to avoid public speaking as much as possible – the reality is that you'll almost always be better served by taking steps toward growth.

Because, ultimately, our careers and personal lives are built on relationships, and our relationships are built on communication. Ignoring a problem, even if it seems possible, is nearly always unwise.

Again, the good news is that everyone has communication weaknesses. From entry level employees to Fortune 100 CEOs, everyone has room to improve. And anyone can improve, by learning the skills and techniques of good communication.

The Ammerman Experience is a communications development firm that shows people how to effectively and confidently reach and influence others through the spoken word. For more information, visit www.ammermanexperience.com.

Good Managers Understand the Concept of Psychological Safety

Greg, a manager in a large company asked for his employees to be open with him. That didn't go over well since he regularly dressed down those who came to him with bad news or mistakes they'd made. He was particularly adept at cutting these employees off mid-explanation and going off on them. His weapons of choice were angrily belittling those who made mistakes.

Greg used these tactics intentionally, and he felt they worked well. He claimed they were "tools" for him to keep others on their toes and avoid mistakes. Unfortunately, his tools eventually failed him, forcing his resignation because important information that he needed to know wasn't given to him. All because his employees feared his outrage.

The concept of "psychological safety" is one that Greg didn't grasp. The words civility, support, forgiveness, trust, and acceptance all come to mind around this idea of making others feel safe to bring him news he didn't like.

When Greg's rage made people feel unsafe, fallout happened—information was withheld from him, mutual trust disappeared, and civility and respect weren't modelled. Thus, his team began to feel it was okay to disrespect others. Incivility was a virus that infected everyone on his team.

Greg was his own worst enemy. He could use a new perspective and, had he been willing, changed in his behavior. Here's how that might have worked:

Perspective: Greg needed to grasp that controlling people with hurtful tactics just doesn't work the way he expected. If he had put himself in their shoes, he might see and

admire the courage it took for people to come to him with bad news. He might also see mistakes as learning opportunities. Greg's mindset was one of controlling people with fear so mistakes weren't made. They feared him but withheld the very information he needed. Greg's opportunity to see people as human beings that make mistakes that can become learning opportunities may have allowed him to flourish as a leader.

Behavior: If Greg adopted a new perspective, he might be willing to change his behavior to show more respect to others. This could take the form of being open to news

he doesn't like to hear without cutting people off, listening and asking questions to better understand the situation. He could also learn to be supportive of others when they made mistakes while coaching them to learn new ways to avoid future mistakes. He could learn to genuinely thank employees for any information they provide of any sort.

Blaming and shaming those who make errors doesn't work to build people up or help them to feel trusted or engaged. Change your perspective and behavior, and you can make a difference in your employees' work as well as your organization's results. You may also live a happier life.

Article written by By Mary Jo Asmus
<https://www.govexec.com/excellence/promising-practices/2018/05/good-managers-understand-concept-psychological-safety/147867/>





Federal Protective Service Federal Executive Board Leadership Training Agenda



Date: Thursday, June 14, 2018

**Location: 1919 Smith Street Houston, TX 77004
1st Floor Main Conference Room**

9:00 am -10:00 am	Assistant Director for Field Operations Patrick Moses	FPS 101 Strategic Planning
10:00 am-10:15 am	BREAK	
10:15 am-11:15 am	PSO Program Manager Davie Lynch	Protective Security Officer Capability Envelope
11:15 am-12:15 am	LUNCH	
12:15 pm-12:45 pm	Special Agent Frank Elizondo	Protective Intelligence & Investigations: Evolving Threat Picture
12:45-1:00 pm	BREAK	
1:00 pm-3:00 pm	Inspector/K9 Gary Glover Inspector Willie Hilson Inspector Mike Simmons Inspector Jason Schaffer AC James Thibaux	Operational Demonstration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K9 • FPS Duty Gear Display • Operation Shield/ Post Visit • HAZMAT/WMD • Active Shooter
3:00 pm	ADJORN	

REGISTRATION

Name of Participant: _____
Agency: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please email registration to:

Leann.jenkins@gsa.gov **Registration Deadline: June 8, 2018**



Crisis Communications Spokespersons Training for Executives and Senior Leaders



Date:	Tuesday, June 5, 2018
Time:	8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Location:	Leland Building, 1919 Smith Street, 10 th Floor, Houston (Bayou Room)
Why?	<p>Focusing on the things that can “make” or “break” senior leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to maintain a positive relationship with the media in the first hours of a crisis. • How to be a team player rather than merely an individual agency spokesperson. • How to maintain a good media relationship after the crisis is over.
Topics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A quick primer on what to expect from persistent, aggressive reporters covering your problem, crisis or event. • A total of three on-camera exercises. Each exercise is critiqued in an open forum by the instructor. • Training based on a realistic scenario chosen by the client. • Instructors and role players with significant journalism and media relations experience.
Who Should Attend?	Agency Leaders, Senior Managers that have agency responsibility that would place them in a situation to be approached by the media in the event of a natural or man-made disaster.
Cost:	\$1,175.00 per person

Registration

Name _____ Agency _____

Address: _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Position Title: _____

Register early! This class will be limited to twelve participants!

Mail registration to:	Federal Executive Board 2320 La Branch Street, Rm 1107 Houston, TX 77004
Email to:	Gerald.Poole@gsa.gov

Cancellation Policy: Understanding that unforeseen circumstances may preclude an individual from attending, cancellations will be permitted through June 1, 2018. However, after that date, registrations must be honored by the individual or agency involved. If you are unable to attend, substitute attendees are authorized and encouraged!